

(Washington, D.C.) - H. Res 483, a resolution to honor the founding of Big Bend National Park introduced by Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) is expected to pass the U.S. House under suspension today.

"Big Bend National Park exemplifies true leadership of the National Parks Service and 'The Father of Big Bend National Park' Everett Ewing Townsend who 63 years ago had the vision to set aside and preserve this unspoiled landscape," said Congressman Rodriguez. "I am proud to represent Big Bend region and will continue my work to protect and preserve this national treasure. Today, I recognize Big Bend National Park and thank the National Park Service for preserving this region for future generations."

Big Bend National Park represents one of the last pristine swaths of desert and mountain terrain in the American southwest, and is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. June 12, 2007 marked the 63rd anniversary of the establishment of Big Bend National Park, also known as "Texas' Gift to the Nation." The approximately 800,000 acres of land that encompasses much of the Chisos Mountains, American Chihuahuan Desert and the dramatic bend in the Rio Grande, was purchased by the State of Texas and in turn donated to the Federal government. Today, over 300,000 visitors a year enjoy Big Bend National Park and the beautiful biologically diverse landscape that drives the tourism economy in District 23 in West Texas.

**Congressman Rodriguez will deliver the following remarks on the House floor today in support of H. Res 483, the Big Bend National Park resolution:**

*Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 483, to recognize the anniversary of Big Bend National Park.*

*Sixty-three years ago the state of Texas bestowed the 800,000 acres of pristine desert and mountain terrain that now make up the Big Bend National Park upon the United States of America.*

*Big Bend began as a small state park, but in 1942, just following the Great Depression, Texas purchased 600,000 acres of land from private landowners at the price of 1.5 million dollars.*

*The cost was high at the time, but Texas donated the land to the federal government for the establishment of a national park.*

*With that gesture, the state of Texas provided the nation and its citizens with a majestic national park that has been enjoyed for over a half a century so far.*

*This resolution pays tribute not only to the picturesque landscape of the park itself, but to those who made it possible to preserve this land for generations to come.*

*Everett Ewing Townsend, known as the "Father" of Big Bend National Park, was the champion of this effort.*

*In 1894 Townsend traveled to the Chisos Mountains and later recalled that the breathtaking southern view from the mountains made him "see God as he had never seen Him before."*

*He vowed to preserve the region in some way, and sixty-three years later we can see that he has made good on his promise.*

*His efforts, first in the State Legislature and later as the Commissioner of the national park, provided the United States with an unspoiled tract of land that has since been enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors.*

*Big Bend National Park, encompassing the region where the Chihuahuan Desert intersects with the Chisos Mountains features a distinct landscape.*

*The park is surrounded on the south by the mighty Rio Grande.*

*The outer boundary is marked by the area where the flow of the river shifts from southeast to northeast, forming the giant bend after which the park is named.*

*With river, mountain and desert all in one, Big Bend National Park could easily be considered three parks in one.*

*However, west Texas is fortunate to have such a diverse environment preserved within the boundaries of one awe-inspiring park.*

*The establishment of Big Bend National Park in 1944 allowed the vast expanse of land to be conserved.*

*At the same time, it protected the rich history of the region.*

*Native people have inhabited the area for thousands of years, and in more recent years diverse groups of people have traversed the Big Bend.*

*In the past century and a half Spanish explorers, Comanche Indians, Mexican settlers and American ranchers have all traveled through or lived within the park's terrain.*

*Thus, this important resolution recognizes the sixty-third anniversary of the establishment of Big Bend National Park and the people who made their way through the region well before then.*

*H. Res. 483 also honors the National Park Service for their work in the Big Bend.*

*It is important that we recognize Big Bend National Park's contributions to our nation as well as the contribution that the park's founders and staff have made to the land since then.*